

Overall Grammar

UNIT 0

1. The Italian alphabet/L'alfabeto italiano

Alphabet

A, a [a]
B, b [bi]
C, c [ci]
D, d [di]
E, e [e]
F, f [effe]
G, g [gi]
H, h [acca]
I, i [i]
L, l [elle]
M, m [emme]
N, n [enne]
O, o [o]
P, p [pi]
Q, q [qu]
R, r [erre]
S, s [esse]
T, t [ti]
U, u [u]
V, v [vu]
Z, z [zeta]

Vowels

Italian vowels are always articulated in a sharp, clear way, regardless of stress. In standard Italian **a**, **i**, **u**, are always pronounced the same way: *mano – dito – su*.

On the other hand, **e** and **o** in stressed syllables may represent either an open (è, ò) or a closed (é, ó) sound: *resto rete – rosa Roma*.

As a result, the vowel system displays seven different sounds: three front vowels (è, ê, i), three back vowels (ò, ó, u), and one central vowel (a).

Front Vowels	è tè 'tea'	é perché 'why, because'	i vino 'wine'
Back Vowels	ò però 'but, on the contrary'	ó sole 'sun'	u luna 'moon'
Central Vowel	a mare 'sea'		

Please note that writing the accent is mandatory only on the last syllable, and just on some monosyllables, mostly with the function of disambiguating words pronounced in the same way but having different meanings:

tè – tea/ *te* - you

là – there/ *la* - the

Consonants

Italian consonants may be either short or long. Long sounds occur only in word-internal positions, and are written with double letters.

b *banana, rubare, sabbia*

c *cane, muco, mucca; cena, pace, accendere*

d *domani, dado, addio*

f *fico, gufo, ufficio*

g *gatto, legare, leggo; giro, agire, raggi*

l *luna, pala, palla*

m *mela, remo, mamma*

n *nove, nono, nonno*

p *pera, sapere, tappo*

q *quando, acqua*

r *rosa, caro, carro*

s *sera, casa, rosso*

t *tempo, note, notte*

v *vino, nuovo, ovvio*

z *zero, azzurro*

2. The Italian sounds/I suoni dell'italiano

Please note that **the letter q** is only found in combination with the vowel *u*; *qu* sounds like *cu*, and in word-internal position it is normally doubled like this: *cqu*.

The letter h is never pronounced, but it is used to distinguish similar words (e.g. *a* 'to' vs. *ha* 'he/she has'; *anno* 'year' vs. *hanno* 'they have'), and to represent different sounds for the letters *c* and *g*.

C and g always sound 'hard' before back and central vowels (*co, go; cu, gu; ca, ga*), and 'soft' before front vowels (*ce, ci* and *ge, gi*), unless they are followed by the letter *h* (*che, ghe* and *chi, ghi*): in this case they are pronounced 'hard'.

SOUNDS	soft	soft	hard	hard
Front Vowels	<i>ce, ge</i>	<i>ci, gi</i>	<i>che, ghe</i>	<i>chi, ghi</i>
Back Vowels	<i>cio, gio</i>	<i>ciu, giu</i>	<i>co, go</i>	<i>cu, gu</i>
Central Vowel	<i>cia, gia</i>		<i>ca, ga</i>	

cera, amici, amiche, fichi

gelato, giro, streghe, maghi

ciò, ciurma, cosa, curiosità

giostra, giù, gola, gufo

ciabatta, casa

giallo, gallo

The letters *s* and *z* may correspond to either voiced or voiceless sounds, often according to the context.

Followed by voiced consonants (i.e. *b, d, g, m, n, v, l, r*), or between vowels, **the letter s** represents a voiced sound:

sbaglio, rosa

whereas at the beginning/end of words, or followed by voiceless consonants (i.e. *p, t, c/q, f*) it is voiceless:

sera, lapis, scuola

The letter z tends to be voiced when beginning words and voiceless in internal position, but it may sound either way (no rules!) when long:

zero, zucca, zucchero

stazione, calze

pazzo, pizza, pezzo (voiceless) but *azzurro, mezzo* (voiced)

Special attention must be paid to the following combinations:

sci/sce pronounced soft like in

scienza, pesce

(contrary to pronounced hard *sc* in all the other combinations:

scatola, sconto, scuro, schiena)

gli mostly pronounced soft like in:

gli, gigli, figlio

gn always pronounced soft:

cagna, cagne, ragni, ragno, gnu

3. Basic Italian Grammar/ Grammatica italiana di base

Nouns and articles

The Italian noun has two genders, feminine and masculine, and two numbers, singular and plural. Italian nouns are generally preceded by the article, which can be definite or indefinite.

You will learn more about nouns and articles in the course, but for now just have a look at these nouns that you will meet in the first unit. Read and try to memorise them:

l'amico - the friend (male)

l'aeroporto - the airport

la casa - the house

il giornale - the newspaper

il libro - the book

il letto - the bed

la macchina - the car

la penna - the pen

la stazione - the station

lo studente - the student

Verbs

Verbs to be (*essere*) and to have (*avere*) are useful to introduce someone. You will learn their conjugation during the course, but for now just look at these examples:

Ciao, io sono Paolo e lei è Anna. Tu chi sei?

Hi, I'm Paolo and she is Anna. Who are you?

Noi siamo italiani, e voi?

We are Italian, and you?

Io ho 20 anni. Quanti anni hai?

I'm 20 years old. How old are you?

Io ho un amico italiano.

I've got an Italian friend.

Italian verbs are traditionally divided into three conjugations according to the ending of the infinitive form, namely *-are*, *-ere*, *-ire*. Some Italian verbs are irregular, so they follow their own conjugation. You will learn this in detail, but for now just have a look at these basic sentences in the present tense:

Anna e Alex arrivano in Italia - Anna and Alex arrive in Italy

Lorenzo aspetta Anna e Alex - Lorenzo waits for Anna and Alex

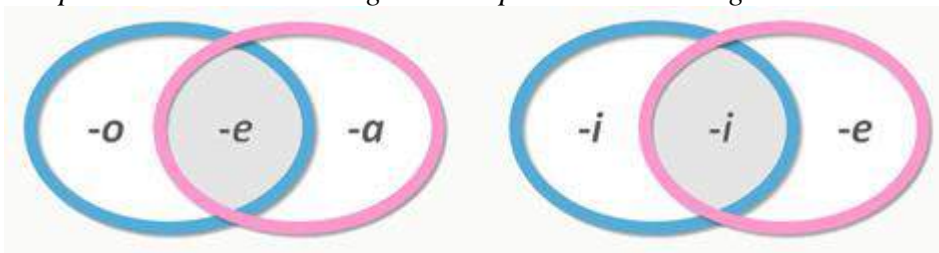
Anna scrive le parole nuove - Anna writes down the new words

UNIT 1

1. Gender and number of nouns/ *Sostantivi: genere e numero*

The Italian noun has two genders, feminine (f.) and masculine (m.), and two numbers, singular (s.) and plural (p.). In the singular, masculine words typically end with the vowel *-o*, feminine words typically end with the vowel *-a*, while words ending with *-e* may belong to either the masculine or feminine gender. Masculine words ending with *-o* in the singular end with the vowel *-i* in the plural, feminine words ending with *-a* in the singular end with the vowel *-e* in the plural. Words ending with *-e* in the singular end with the vowel *-i* in the plural.

The pictures below show singular and plural noun endings:



Noun endings:

	Singular	Plural
Masculine	-o	-i
Feminine	-a	-e
Masculine or Feminine	-e	-i

Some examples:

	Singular	Plural
Masculine	<i>ragazzo</i> - boy	<i>ragazzi</i> - boys
Masculine	<i>libro</i> - book	<i>libri</i> - books
Feminine	<i>ragazza</i> - girl	<i>ragazze</i> - girls
Feminine	<i>penna</i> - pen	<i>penne</i> - pens
Masculine	<i>padre</i> - father	<i>padri</i> - fathers
Feminine	<i>madre</i> - mother	<i>madri</i> - mothers

2. Definite Articles/Articoli determinativi

Definite articles indicate a specific object (in the general sense: animated and not animated, masculine and feminine, singular and plural). IL, LO, LA, L', I, GLI, LE are used for the English article 'the'.

	Masculine	Feminine
Singular	<i>il, lo, l'</i>	<i>la, l'</i>
Plural	<i>i, gli</i>	<i>le</i>

Singular:

IL is used with masculine words beginning with most consonants:

il ragazzo - *the boy*

il giornale - *the newspaper*

LO is used with masculine words beginning with s + consonant, or with z/gn/pn/ps/x:

lo specchio - *the mirror*

lo studente - *the student*

lo zoo - *the zoo*

lo psicologo - *the psychologist*

LA is used with feminine words beginning with a consonant:

la mela - *the apple*

la stazione - *the station*

L' (with apostrophe) is used with masculine and feminine words beginning with a vowel:

l'uomo - *the man*

l'onda - *the wave*

l'insegnante - *the teacher* (N.B. both male and female)

Plural:

I is used with masculine words beginning with most consonants:

i colori - *the colours*

i bambini - *the children*

GLI is used with masculine words beginning with s + consonant, or with z/gn/pn/ps/x, or with a vowel:

gli zaini - *the rucksacks*

gli studiosi - *the scholars*

gli animali - *the animals*

LE is used with all feminine words:

le mele - *the apples*

le api - *the bees*

3. Verb to be and verb to have/Verbo essere e verbo avere

Verbo essere (to be)

<i>io</i>	sono
<i>tu</i>	sei
<i>lui, lei</i>	è
<i>noi</i>	siamo
<i>voi</i>	siete
<i>loro</i>	sono

N.B. e (and) ≠ è (he/she is)

Verbo avere (to have)

<i>io</i>	ho
<i>tu</i>	hai
<i>lui, lei</i>	ha
<i>noi</i>	abbiamo
<i>voi</i>	avete
<i>loro</i>	hanno

N.B. In Italian the letter 'h' is mute, i.e. not pronounced. It is just a graphic sign useful to disambiguate words pronounced in the same way but having different meanings:

o (or) ≠ **ho** (I have)

a (to) ≠ **ha** (he/she has)

anno (year) ≠ **hanno** (they have)

Essere and avere are useful to introduce someone. Look at the examples:

Ciao, io **sono** Paolo e lei è Anna.

Hi, I'm Paolo and she is Anna.

Siete italiani?

Are you Italian?

Sì, **siamo** italiani.

Yes, we are Italian.

Quanti anni **hai**?

How old are you?

Io **ho** 20 anni, e voi?

I'm 20 years old, and you?

Noi **abbiamo** 19 anni.

We're 19.

4. Subjective personal pronouns/I pronomi personali soggetto

Personal pronouns are used instead of the name, and they assume the same logical-syntactical functions of the name in the sentence. Subjective personal pronouns are:

Io - I

tu - you

lui, lei - he, she (egli, ella) he, she (formal, mainly in written texts)

(*esso, essa*) - it (rare, mainly in written texts)

noi - we

voi - you

loro - they

(*essi, esse*) - they (mainly in written texts)

The pronoun *Lei* is normally used as a polite form to address people (unknown or with a higher status):

Scusi, Lei parla italiano? - Excuse me, do you speak Italian?

Professor Rossi, Lei insegna italiano? - Do you teach Italian, Professor Rossi?

In some regions, the form *Voi* is still used with the same function, but it has almost completely disappeared from standard contemporary Italian.

5. Conjugations and Present Tense of Regular Verbs/

Le tre coniugazioni e l'indicativo presente dei verbi regolari

Italian verbs are traditionally divided into three conjugations according to the ending of the infinitive form, namely *-are*, *-ere*, *-ire*. Moreover, the 3rd conjugation is divided into 2 sub-groups: verbs belonging to group b just add “*isc*” before the ending of singular persons and before the ending of the 3rd person plural.

<i>1st conjugation -are</i>	<i>arrivare</i> (to arrive)
<i>2nd conjugation -ere</i>	<i>vedere</i> (to see)
<i>3rd conjugation -ire (group a)</i>	<i>dormire</i> (to sleep)
<i>3rd conjugation -ire (group b)</i>	<i>capire</i> (to understand)

Italian verbs have the following endings in the present tense:

	<i>arrivare</i> (to arrive)	<i>vedere</i> (to see)	<i>dormire</i> (to sleep)	<i>capire</i> (to understand)
io	arrivo	vedo	dormo	capisco
tu	arrivi	vedi	dormi	capisci
lui, lei	arriva	vede	dorme	capisce
noi	arriviamo	vediamo	dormiamo	capiamo
voi	arrivate	vedete	dormite	capite
loro	arrivano	vedono	dormono	capiscono

<i>Present tense endings</i>				
	<i>-are</i>	<i>-ere</i>	<i>-ire (group a)</i>	<i>-ire (group b)</i>
io	-o	-o	-o	-isc-o
tu	-i	-i	-i	-isc-i
lui, lei	-a	-e	-e	-isc-e
noi	-iamo	-iamo	-iamo	-iamo
voi	-ate	-ete	-ite	-ite
loro	-ano	-ono	-ono	-isc-ono

N.B. Personal pronouns are usually omitted, but they are used to express emphasis:

Leggo molto I read a lot

Io leggo molto, loro poco - I read a lot, they (read) little

UNIT 2

1. Indefinite articles/Articoli Indeterminativi

The indefinite article indicates an imprecise, unspecific individual or thing. In Italian *un, uno, una, un'* are used for the English article 'a/an', or the numeral 'one'.

UN is used with masculine words beginning with most consonants and with vowels:

un libro - a book/one book

un aereo - a plane/one plane

UNO is used with masculine words beginning with /z/gn/pn/ps/x, or with s + consonant:

uno zaino - a rucksack

uno psicologo - a psychologist

uno specchio - a mirror

UNA is used with feminine words beginning with a consonant:

una casa - a house

una ragazza - a girl

UN' (with apostrophe) with feminine words beginning with a vowel:

un'anatra - a duck

un'isola - an island

<i>Indefinite articles</i>	
<i>Masculine</i>	un/uno
<i>Feminine</i>	una/un'

2. Qualifying adjectives/Aggettivi qualificativi

A qualifying adjective is a word that modifies the meaning of a noun by adding some description to it. In Italian almost all adjectives follow the same basic patterns as the nouns, with their endings depending on gender and number.

There are two classes or groups of adjectives: those ending in **-o** and those ending in **-e**.

1) Adjectives ending in **-o** in the masculine have four forms.

	Singular	Plural
Masculine	-o	-i
Feminine	-a	-e

Some examples:

Il ragazzo italiano - The Italian boy

I ragazzi italiani - The Italian boys

La ragazza italiana - The Italian girl

Le ragazze italiane - The Italian girls

2) Adjectives in **-e** show the same ending for the masculine and the feminine singular; in the plural, the **-e** changes to **-i**.

	Singular	Plural
Masculine	-e	-i

Some examples:

Il ragazzo inglese - The English boy

La ragazza inglese - The English girl

I ragazzi inglesi - The English boys

Le ragazze inglesi - The English girls

When referred to nouns of different gender, an adjective always takes the masculine ending.

I padri e le madri italiani Italian fathers and mothers

3. Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns/Aggettivi e pronomi dimostrativi

Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns indicate the person or the object being talked about. The Italian forms *questo* and *quello* correspond exactly to the English ‘this’ and ‘that’. *Questo* indicates somebody or something that is near to the speaker in terms of space, time or mention in the discourse. *Quello* indicates somebody or something that is far away from the speaker in terms of space, time or mention in the discourse.

Demonstratives agree in gender and number with the noun they refer to, and, when used as adjectives, they always precede it.

Like all the nouns and adjectives ending in **-o**, *questo* has four endings, reflecting agreement with the noun it refers to:

Questo libro - This book

Questi libri - These books

Questa casa - This house

Queste case - These houses

As an adjective, i.e. when attached to a noun, *quello* is used with masculine words beginning with /z/gn/pn/ps/x, or with s + consonant. The plural of *quello* is *quegli*. *Quello* becomes *quel* with masculine words beginning with most consonants; the plural of *quel* is *quei*. The feminine form is *quella/quelle*.

Quello specchio/Quegli specchi - That mirror/Those mirrors

Quello zaino/ Quegli zaini - That rucksack/Those rucksacks

Quel libro/Quei libri - That book/Those books

Quel quadro/Quei quadri - That picture/Those pictures

Quella borsa/Quelle borse - That bag/Those bags

As a pronoun, i.e. when standing alone (pronoun=in place of the noun), *quello* shows four endings, according to the noun it implicitly refers to:

Quale vestito prendi? Prendo quello (= *quel vestito*)

Quali libri prendi? Prendo quelli (= *quei libri*)

Quale borsa prendi? Prendo quella (= *quella borsa*)

Quali penne prendi? Prendo quelle (= *quelle penne*)

Please note also that there is elision of *questo*, *questa*, and *quello*, *quella* before a word beginning with a vowel, independently of its gender.

Quest'aereo - This airplane

Quest'aula - This classroom

Quell'orologio - That watch

Quell'autostrada - That highway

Moreover, *questa* is sometimes shortened and contracted with the noun it modifies:
questa sera > **stasera** this evening

4. Possessive adjectives and pronouns/Aggettivi e pronomi possessivi

Possessive adjectives and pronouns indicate ownership of, or relation to, something.

Il mio libro - My book

Il tuo amico - Your friend

As you can see, possessive adjectives precede the noun they refer to, and agree with it in gender and number, like any other adjective. Moreover, they are usually accompanied by the definite article, as shown in the following table:

	<i>Masculine Singular</i>	<i>Masculine Plural</i>	<i>Feminine Singular</i>	<i>Feminine Plural</i>
<i>my</i>	<i>il mio</i>	<i>i miei</i>	<i>la mia</i>	<i>le mie</i>
<i>your</i>	<i>il tuo</i>	<i>i tuoi</i>	<i>la tua</i>	<i>le tue</i>
<i>his, her, its</i>	<i>il suo</i>	<i>i suoi</i>	<i>la sua</i>	<i>le sue</i>
<i>our</i>	<i>il nostro</i>	<i>i nostri</i>	<i>la nostra</i>	<i>le nostre</i>
<i>your</i>	<i>il vostro</i>	<i>i vostri</i>	<i>la vostra</i>	<i>le vostre</i>
<i>their</i>	<i>il loro</i>	<i>i loro</i>	<i>la loro</i>	<i>le loro</i>

Some examples:

Questa è la mia camera - This is my bedroom

Loro sono i miei amici - They are my friends

Il tuo computer è nuovo - Your computer is new

La tua ragazza è simpatica - Your girlfriend is nice

Il suo amico è alto - His/her friend is tall

Le sue scarpe sono belle - His/her shoes are beautiful

Quello è il nostro giardino - That is our garden

La nostra macchina è nuova - Our car is new

La vostra città è bella - Your town is beautiful

Questi sono i vostri libri - These are your books

La loro casa è grande - Their house is big

I loro libri sono interessanti - Their books are interesting

When used as a pronoun, the possessive is usually not accompanied by the article:

Questo libro è mio - This book is mine

But: *Questo è il mio libro* - This is my book

È tua questa penna? - Is this pen yours?

But: *Questa è la tua penna?* - Is this your pen?

Generally, the possessive adjective is not preceded by the article when it accompanies singular nouns referring to family members:

Mia moglie è italiana - My wife is Italian

Suo cugino è simpatico - His/her cousin is nice

However, the article is retained when the family nouns are in the plural and with *loro* (both in the singular and in the plural):

I miei fratelli - My brothers
Le mie cugine - My cousins (female)
Il loro cugino - Their cousin
Le loro zie - Their aunts

The article is optionally used with *mamma* ‘mum’, *papà* (babbo) ‘dad’, *nonna* ‘grandmother’, and *nonno* ‘grandfather’:

La mia mamma/Mia mamma - My mum
Il tuo nonno/tuo nonno - Your grandfather

5. Gender and number of nouns/2/Sostantivi: genere e numero/2

In Italian there are some nouns that behave in a specific way.

Some feminine nouns end in **–o** or in **–i** and their plural is invariable:

la radio/le radio - the radio/the radios
la moto/le moto - the motorbike/the motorbikes
but *la mano/le mani* - the hand/the hands
la tesi/le tesi - the thesis/the theses
la crisi/le crisi - the crisis/the crises
la bici/le bici - the bike/the bikes

Some masculine nouns end in **–a** and their plural is in **–i**:

il problema/i problemi - the problem/the problems
il poeta/i poeti - the poet/the poets

Nouns ending in **–tà** and **–tù** are feminine and their plural is invariable:

la città/le città - the town/the towns
l’università/le università - the università/the universities
la virtù/le virtù - the virtue/the virtues

Nouns ending with a consonant are generally masculine and their plural is invariable:

il computer/i computer - the computer/the computers
l’autobus/gli autobus - the bus/the buses
il film/i film - the film/the films

Nouns ending in **–ista** can be both masculine and feminine and their plural varies accordingly:

l’artista/gli artisti-le artiste - the artist/the artists
il-la farmacista/i farmacisti-le farmaciste - the pharmacist/the pharmacists

Nouns ending in **–co** and **–go** can form their plural in **–chi** and **–ghi** or in **–ci** and **–gi**:

il fiasco/i fiaschi - the flask/the flasks
l’albergo/gli alberghi - the hotel/the hotels
l’amico/gli amici - the friend/the friends
lo psicologo/gli psicologi - the psychologist/the psychologists

Feminine nouns ending in **–ca** and **–ga** form their plural in **–che** and **–ghe**:

l’amica/le amiche - the friend/the friends
la collega/le colleghe - the colleague/the colleagues

Some masculine nouns (mostly indicating the parts of the body) have a feminine plural:

il dito/le dita - the finger/the fingers

il braccio/le braccia - the arm/the arms
il ginocchio/le ginocchia - the knee/the knees
l'uovo/le uova - the egg/the eggs
il lenzuolo/le lenzuola - the bed sheet/the bed sheets
The plural of *l'uomo* (the man) is *gli uomini* (the men).

6. Affirmative, negative and interrogative form/ Forma affermativa, negativa, interrogativa

Sentences have specific functions. They can be used to affirm something, ask questions, give commands, express moods, and so on.

Declarative (or affirmative) sentences generally are simple sentences with one verb in the indicative mood; they allow the speaker to make statements and communicate information in a straightforward way:

Francesco è italiano - Francesco is Italian

In declarative sentences with object nouns, word order is similar in both Italian and English:

Io mangio le mele I'm eating apples

Alberto suona la chitarra - Alberto plays the guitar

To transform an affirmative sentence into a **negative sentence**, place the word **non** directly before the conjugated verb:

Leggo molto - I read a lot

Non leggo molto - I do not read a lot

La ragazza parla l'italiano - The girl speaks Italian

La ragazza non parla l'italiano - The girl does not speak Italian

In written language, an **interrogative sentence** always ends in a question mark. In spoken Italian, a rising voice intonation signals that a question is being asked:

Giulia è la sorella di Anna - Giulia is Anna's sister

Giulia è la sorella di Anna? - Is Giulia Anna's sister?

Giulia ha un gatto - Giulia has got a cat

Giulia ha un gatto? - Has Giulia got a cat?

Yes-no questions can also be formed by putting the subject at the end of the sentence:

Giovanni è a casa? or *È a casa Giovanni?* - Is Giovanni at home?

As in English, you can change a declarative sentence into an interrogative one by using **question tags**, that is by adding a short phrase like *no?*, *vero?*, *giusto?*, *non è vero?* at the end of the sentence:

Giovanni e Francesco sono italiani, non è vero? Giovanni and Francesco are Italian, aren't they?

Tu sei Anna, giusto? - You are Anna, aren't you?

To elicit information, you can use many different **interrogative words** like *chi* 'who', *che cosa* (often shortened in *che*, or in *cosa*) 'what', *dove* 'where', *come* 'how', *perché* 'why', *quando* 'when', *quanto* 'how much', *quale* 'which'. On the whole, these interrogative words work in the same way as their English equivalents:

Chi è l'amico di Lucia? - Who is Lucia's friend?

Che cosa vuol dire 'benvenuto'? - What does 'welcome' mean?

Che mangi? - What are you eating?

Cosa preferisci? - What do you prefer?

Dove abitano gli amici di Lucia? - Where do Lucia's friends live?

Come stai? - How are you?

Perché siete in Italia? - Why are you in Italy?

Quando arriva l'aereo? - When does the plane arrive?

Quanto costa un caffè? - How much is a coffee?

Quale treno prendi? - Which train do you take?

N.B.

Come+è...? = Com'è...?

Com'è la camera? - What is the bedroom like?

Dove+è...? = Dov'è...?

Dov'è il bagno? - Where is the bathroom?

Quanto agrees in gender and number with the noun it refers to:

Quanto tempo hai? - How much time do you have?

Quanti fratelli hai? - How many brothers have you got?

Quanta pazienza hai? - How much patience do you have?

Quante sorelle hai? - How many sisters have you got?

UNIT 3

1. Courtesy form/Forma di cortesia

The use of courtesy forms is very frequent in Italian language. When you need to address people - strangers, teachers, professional superiors, distant acquaintances, and anyone about whom you're unsure - formally, you have to use the pronoun *Lei* (feminine, 3rd person singular, for one person, both male and female), with the verb in the 3rd person singular. The capitalisation of *Lei* to distinguish it from *lei* 'she', is becoming less and less common, even in formal correspondence. In contemporary spoken Italian, it is also extremely rare to make adjectives, past participles, etc., agree in gender with *Lei* if the subject is masculine.

Scusi, Lei è il nuovo insegnante?

Excuse me Sir, are you the new professor?

Lei, dottore, ha sempre ragione!

You, Mr doctor, are always right!

The plural form to address people formally is *Voi*, with the verb in the 2nd person plural.

Buonasera, Voi siete i Signori Rossi, immagino.

Good evening, you are Mr and Mrs Rossi, I guess.

In very formal contexts, the plural form can be *Loro*, with the verb in the 3rd person plural.

Buonasera, che cosa prendono i Signori? - Good evening, what would you like? (lit. Good evening, what do the Sirs desire?)

Courtesy form

Singular	Lei - with the verb in the 3rd person singular
Plural	Voi - with the verb in the 2nd person plural

Loro (rare) - with the verb in the 3rd person plural

2. Irregular verbs/Verbi irregolari

	<i>andare</i> (to go)	<i>venire</i> (to come)	<i>uscire</i> (to go out)	<i>stare</i> (to stay)	<i>rimanere</i> (to remain)	<i>sedere</i> (to sit)
<i>io</i>	vado	vengo	esco	sto	rimango	siedo
<i>tu</i>	vai	vieni	esci	stai	rimani	siedi
<i>lui, lei</i>	va	viene	esce	sta	rimane	siede
<i>noi</i>	andiamo	veniamo	usciamo	stiamo	rimaniamo	sediamo
<i>voi</i>	andate	venite	uscite	state	rimanete	sedete
<i>loro</i>	vanno	vengono	escono	stanno	rimangono	siedono

	<i>dare</i> (to give)	<i>fare</i> (to do)	<i>dire</i> (to say)	<i>bere</i> (to drink)	<i>sapere</i> (to know)	<i>scegliere</i> (to choose)
<i>io</i>	do	faccio	dico	bevo	so	scelgo
<i>tu</i>	dai	fai	dici	bevi	sai	scegli
<i>lui, lei</i>	dà	fa	dice	beve	sa	sceglie
<i>noi</i>	diamo	facciamo	diciamo	beviamo	sappiamo	scegliamo
<i>voi</i>	date	fate	dite	bevete	sapete	scegliete
<i>loro</i>	danno	fanno	dicono	bevono	sanno	scelgono

Verbs having an *i* before their infinitive ending (like *cominciare* 'to start' and *mangiare* 'to eat') are regular but they do not take the *i* of present tense endings:

Tu cominci (and not *tu cominci*i**)

Noi mangiamo (and not *noi mangiamo*i**)

Verbs having *c* and *g* before their infinitive ending (like *sprecare* 'to waste' and *spiegare* 'to explain') are regular but they add *h* to maintain the 'hard' sound of *c* and *g*:

Tu sprechi il denaro - You waste your money

Noi spieghiamo l'esercizio - We explain the exercise

3. Modal verbs/Verbi modali

	<i>potere</i>	<i>volere</i>	<i>dovere</i>
<i>io</i>	posso	voglio	devo
<i>tu</i>	puoi	vuoi	devi
<i>lui, lei</i>	può	vuole	deve

<i>noi</i>	possiamo	vogliamo	dobbiamo
<i>voi</i>	potete	volete	dovete
<i>loro</i>	possono	vogliono	devono

Modal verbs are used to express possibility (*potere*), willingness (*volere*), obligation and necessity (*dovere*). They are followed by an infinitive form:

Posso uscire? - May I go out?

Non voglio mangiare la carne - I don't want to eat meat

Devo leggere quel libro - I have to read that book

We use the verb **potere** to indicate the possibility or the impossibility to do something:

Oggi posso stare a casa - Today I can stay at home

Oggi non posso uscire - Today I can't go out

We use *potere* also to politely ask for something and to indicate the permission to do something:

Posso avere un bicchiere di vino? - May I have a glass of wine?

Non posso suonare la chitarra - I can't play the guitar (my neighbours do not want)

But we use the verb **sapere** 'to know' to indicate the ability to do something:

Non so suonare la chitarra - I can't play the guitar (I'm not able to)

We use **volere** to indicate willingness and desire:

Voglio uscire! - I want to go out!

Che cosa volete bere? - What do you want to drink?

We use the verb **dovere** to indicate an obligation or a necessity:

Prima di uscire, dobbiamo studiare - Before going out, we have to study

È tardi, devo tornare a casa - It is late, I must go home

4. *There is, there are/C'è, ci sono*

In Italian *c'è* 'there is' and *ci sono* 'there are' are used to indicate the existence of something. The expression *c'è*, with the verb *essere* in the 3rd person singular, must be used with a singular subject, while *ci sono*, with the verb *essere* in the 3rd person plural, must be used with a plural subject.

C'è un museo qui vicino - There is a museum close by

A Firenze ci sono molti musei - There are many museums in Florence

To point out the existence of something in view, you can say *ecco!*, an invariable form that can be used with singular or plural nouns.

Ecco il museo! - Here's the museum!

Ecco Alex e Anna! - Here are Alex and Anna!

When locating things, buildings and individuals, you may need some other useful words to indicate their position:

Indicators of space

davanti (a) *in front of*

dietro (a, di) <i>behind</i>
sopra (a, di) <i>above, on</i>
sotto (a, di) <i>under,</i> <i>underneath</i>
dentro (di) <i>in, inside</i>
fuori (di) <i>out, outside</i>
vicino (a) <i>near, nearby</i>
lontano (da) <i>far from</i>
a destra <i>on the right</i>
a sinistra <i>on the left</i>

Davanti a voi c'è una statua - In front of you there is a statue
La finestra è dietro il divano - The window is behind the sofa
Il computer è sopra il tavolo - The computer is on the table
Il gatto è sotto la sedia - The cat is under the chair
Il libro è dentro la borsa - The book is in the bag
Che cosa c'è fuori? - What is there outside?
Io abito vicino a Firenze - I live near Florence
Il supermercato non è lontano da qui - The supermarket is not far from here
Il letto è a destra - The bed is on the right
L'armadio è a sinistra - The cupboard is on the left

5. Prepositions/Preposizioni

Prepositions are short words that are used to express various semantic relations and syntactic functions.

DI-A-DA-IN-CON-SU-PER-TRA-FRA

Di: of

Questo è il libro di Piero - This is Piero's book
Lei è l'amica di Francesca - She is Francesca's friend

A: to, in (e.g. names of towns)

Andiamo a Firenze - We are going to Florence
Abito a Roma - I live in Rome

Da: from, since, to, at (with location referring to people)

Vengo da Bologna - I come from Bologna
La festa è da Mario - The party is at Mario's

In: in (e.g. countries, regions, streets)

Noi abitiamo in via Giotto - We live in Giotto street
Palermo è in Sicilia - Palermo is in Sicily

Con: with

Esco con i miei amici - I go out with my friends
Con chi parli? - Who are you talking to?

Su: on, over, about

Il gatto dorme su una sedia - The cat is sleeping on a chair

Leggo un libro su Leopardi - I am reading a book about Leopardi

Per: for

Questo è un regalo per Sonia - This is a gift for Sonia

Compro i fiori per Giulia - I'm buying flowers for Giulia

Tra/Fra: between, among, in (temporal)

Il divano è tra la porta e la finestra - The sofa is between the door and the window

Arriviamo fra cinque minuti - We will arrive in five minutes

UNIT 4

1. Irregular verbs/2/Verbi irregolari/2

	<i>salire</i> (to go up)	<i>spegnere</i> (to turn off)	<i>riuscire</i> (to succeed)	<i>tenere</i> (to keep)	<i>ritenere</i> (to believe)	<i>proporre</i> (to suggest)
<i>io</i>	salgo	spengo	riesco	tengo	ritengo	propongo
<i>tu</i>	sali	spegni	riesci	tieni	ritieni	proponi
<i>lui, lei</i>	sale	spegne	riesce	tiene	ritiene	propone
<i>noi</i>	saliamo	spegnamo	riusciamo	teniamo	riteniamo	proponiamo
<i>voi</i>	salite	spegnete	riuscite	tenete	ritenete	proponete
<i>loro</i>	salgono	spengono	riescono	tengono	ritengono	propongono

	<i>produrre</i> (to produce)	<i>tradurre</i> (to translate)	<i>morire</i> (to die)	<i>togliere</i> (to remove)	<i>raccogliere</i> (to collect)	<i>trarre</i> (to draw)
<i>io</i>	produco	traduco	muoio	tolgo	raccolgo	traggo
<i>tu</i>	produci	traduci	muori	togli	raccogli	trai
<i>lui, lei</i>	produce	traduce	muore	toglie	raccoglie	trae
<i>noi</i>	produciamo	traduciamo	moriamo	togliamo	raccogliamo	traiamo
<i>voi</i>	producete	traducete	morite	togliete	raccogliete	traete
<i>loro</i>	producono	traducono	muoiono	tolgono	raccogliono	traggono

To sum up

Irregular verbs must be learnt by heart. In any case, there are verbs that conjugate following the same pattern as you can see in the list below:

*scegliere (to choose), togliere (to remove), cogliere (to catch), raccogliere (to collect);
tenere (to keep), ritenere (to believe), mantenere (to maintain);
porre (to put), proporre (to suggest), esporre (to expose);
trarre (to draw), distrarre (to distract), attrarre (to attract);
uscire (to go out), riuscire (to succeed).*

2. Reflexive Verbs/Verbi riflessivi

An Italian verb is reflexive when the action carried out by the subject is performed on, or directed back to, the same subject. In order to make an Italian verb reflexive, just drop the *-e* of its infinitive ending and add the reflexive pronoun *si*. In the infinitive form, reflexive verbs thus end in *-arsi* (pettinare ‘to comb’ becomes *pettinarsi*), *-ersi* (mettere ‘to put’ becomes *mettersi*), or *-irsi* (divertire ‘to amuse’ becomes *divertirsi*). When conjugating reflexive verbs, just place the proper reflexive pronoun (*mi, ti, si, ci, vi, si*) between the personal pronoun and the conjugated verb, as shown in the following table:

Lavarsi:

Personal Pronouns	Reflexive Pronouns	Conjugated Verb
io	mi	<i>lavo</i>
tu	ti	<i>lavi</i>
lui/lei	si	<i>lava</i>
noi	ci	<i>laviamo</i>
voi	vi	<i>lavate</i>
loro	si	<i>lavano</i>

Italian Reflexive Verbs are used more often than in English; sometimes you can use a reflexive verb in Italian but not in English:

Io mi sveglio alle sette - I wake up at seven (lit. I wake myself at seven)

Moreover, some reflexive verbs can also be used without the reflexive pronouns, and in such case their meaning changes:

Tu ti alzi - You get up

Tu alzi la sedia - You lift the chair

Reciprocal Reflexive Verbs

Some reflexive verbs describe a reciprocal action that involves more than one person. Because of the focus on multiple parties, when conjugating these verbs you have to use the plural reflexive pronouns *ci, vi, and si*, which agree with subject and verb form.

Io e Alex ci conosciamo da molti anni

Alex and I have known each other for many years now.

Tu e Anna vi incontrate spesso all'Università

You and Anna often bump into each other at the university.

Alex e Lorenzo si salutano all'aeroporto

Alex and Lorenzo say hello to each other at the airport.

3. Direct object pronouns/Pronomi diretti

A direct object is the direct recipient of the action described by the verb. Verbs that need a direct object are transitive ones. Direct object pronouns replace direct object nouns.

In Italian the forms of the direct object pronouns are as follows:

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
mi <i>me</i>	ci <i>us</i>
ti <i>you</i>	vi <i>you</i>
lo (m.) <i>him, it</i>	li (m.) <i>them</i>
la (f.) <i>her, it</i>	le (f.) <i>them</i>

Anna legge un libro (Anna reads a book) - *Anna lo legge* (Anna reads it)

Alex vede Lucia (Alex sees Lucia) - *Alex la vede* (Alex sees her)

As you can see from the examples, direct object nouns usually follow the verb, but object pronouns must be placed before the verb.

Anna invita gli amici (Anna invites friends) - *Anna li invita* (Anna invites them)

Note also that in negative sentences, the word **non** must come before the object pronoun.

Anna non li invita Anna does not invite them

Object pronouns are attached to the end of an infinitive (the final -e is dropped), and to the form **ecco** to express 'here I am', 'here you are', and so on.

Anna non vuole invitarli - Anna doesn't want to invite them

Vedi Anna? Eccola! - Can you see Anna? Here she is!

It is also possible to elide singular object pronouns in front of verbs that begin with a vowel, or with an h (forms of *avere*). However, the plural pronouns **li** and **le** are never elided.

M'ama, non m'ama - He loves me, he loves me not

4. Indirect object pronouns/Pronomi indiretti

While direct object nouns and pronouns answer the question *what?* or *whom?*, indirect object nouns and pronouns answer the question *to whom?* or *for whom?* In English the word *to* can be omitted, but in Italian the preposition **a** always occurs before an indirect object noun. Indirect object pronouns replace indirect object nouns. In Italian they are identical to direct object pronouns, except for the 3rd person forms.

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
mi - <i>to/for me</i>	ci - <i>to/for us</i>
ti - <i>to/for you</i>	vi - <i>to/for you</i>
gli - <i>to/for him, it (m.)</i>	gli - <i>to/for them (m. and f.)</i>
le - <i>to/for her, it (f.)</i>	loro - <i>(formal) to/for them (m. and f.)</i>

Indirect object pronouns behave like direct object pronouns, and usually precede a conjugated verb, except for *loro*, which is more formal than *gli* and always follows the verb.

Regaliamo un libro a Lucia (We give a book to Lucia)

Le regaliamo un libro (We give her a book)

Ti posso offrire un caffè? (Can I offer you a coffee?)
Posso offrirti un caffè? (Can I offer you a coffee?)

Voglio parlare **ad Alex e Anna** (I want to talk to Alex and Anna)
Voglio parlargli/**Gli** voglio parlare/Voglio parlare **loro** (I want to talk to them)

Scrivi ai tuoi genitori? No, **gli** telefono (Are you writing to your parents? No, I'm phoning them)

5. Use of the verbs like "piacere"/Usò dei verbi come "piacere"

The Italian verb *piacere* 'to please, to like' is a bit tricky, because it works differently from the corresponding English verb. Instead of saying that 'A likes B', in Italian you say 'B is pleasing to A'. As a result, you have to use the structure: indirect object + verb + subject, as in the example: *Agli italiani piace il calcio* Italians like soccer. Literally: To Italians is pleasing soccer

Note that *piacere* is mostly used in the 3rd person, and the subject, which generally follows the verb, determines whether the verb is singular or plural.

Verb piacere	
io	piaccio
tu	piaci
lui/lei	piace
noi	piacciamo
voi	piacete
loro	piacciono

Agli italiani piacciono gli spaghetti Italians like spaghetti
Mi piacciono gli spaghetti I like spaghetti

Ma:

Io ti piaccio? - Do you like me?

E:

Tu mi piaci molto - I like you a lot

Other verbs that behave similarly to *piacere* are listed below:

dispiacere: to displease, to upset

sembrare: to seem, to look like

parere: to seem, to look like

bastare: to be sufficient, to suffice

mancare: to be lacking, to miss

occorrere: to require, to need

servire: to serve, to be of use

6. Gender and number of nouns/3/ Sostantivi: genere e numero/3

Nouns ending in **-ione** and **-udine** are generally feminine, nouns ending in **-ore** are generally masculine:

- la nazione* - the nation
- la televisione* - the television
- l'abitudine* - the habit
- il professore* - the professor
- l'autore* - the author

Some nouns ending in **-ore** in the masculine can form the feminine either in **-essa** or in **-rice**:

- Il dottore, la dottoressa* - the doctor
- Il professore, la professoressa* - the professor
- Il pittore, la pittrice* - the painter
- L'attore, l'attrice* - the actor, the actress

Other nouns can form the feminine in **-essa**:

- L'avvocato, l'avvocata* - the lawyer
- Il principe, la principessa* - the prince, the princess
- Il conte, la contessa* - the earl, the countess

Nouns ending in **-cia** and **-gia** maintains the **i** in the plural only if they are preceded by a vowel, otherwise they drop the **i**:

- La camicia, le camicie* - the blouse, the blouses
- La ciliegia, le ciliegie* - the cherry, the cherries
- L'arancia, le arance* - the orange, the oranges
- La spiaggia, le spiagge* - the beach, the beaches

Masculine nouns ending in **-io**, generally form their plural with only one **-i**

- L'operaio, gli operai* - the worker, the workers
- Il fornai, i fornai* - the baker, the bakers

UNIT 5

1. Prepositions with definite articles/Preposizioni articolate

Prepositions can be followed by definite articles. In this case, the prepositions *di, a, da, in, su* combine with the definite article and form the so-called *preposizioni articolate*.

<i>Preposizioni articolate</i>							
	il	lo	l'	la	i	gli	le
di	del	dello	dell'	della	dei	degli	delle
a	al	allo	all'	alla	ai	agli	alle
da	dal	dallo	dall'	dalla	dai	dagli	dalle
in	nel	nello	nell'	nella	nei	negli	nelle
su	sul	sullo	sull'	sulla	sui	sugli	sulle

We normally use these prepositions to indicate a specific noun/concept or with plural nouns:

- Studio in biblioteca* - I study in the library
- Studio nella biblioteca comunale* - I study in the town library

Lavoro in ufficio - I work in a office

Lavoro nell'ufficio del direttore - I work in the director office

Abito in Italia - I live in Italy

Abito nell'Italia del Nord - I live in northern Italy

Vado in America - I go to America

Vado negli Stati Uniti - I go to the United States

2. Partitive article/Il partitivo

L'articolo partitivo (partitive article) is expressed by the preposition *di* combined with the definite article. It is used to indicate undefined or approximate quantities and may appear before singular nouns (*del latte, dello zucchero, della farina*) as well as before plural nouns to indicate some part of a category or an unspecified number of things/persons (*dei libri, delle ragazze, degli studenti*), thus working as plural of indefinite articles.

For example:

Maria beve del caffè - Maria is drinking some coffee

Vuoi dello zucchero? - Do you want some sugar?

Ho delle cravatte blu - I have a few blue ties

Esco con degli amici - I go out with some friends

3. Adverbs/Avverbi

The main function of adverbs is to modify the meaning of a verb. The most typical way to form Italian adverbs is by adding the suffix *-mente* to an adjective. For adjectives of the first group (*-o, -a* type) the suffix is added to the feminine form (*antico, antica > anticamente*). For adjectives of the second group (*-e* type) the suffix is added to the singular form (*breve > brevemente*), but with adjectives ending in *-le* and *-re*, the final *-e* is dropped first (*difficile > difficilmente*).

Some examples:

Veramente non lo so! - Actually I don't know!

Imparo facilmente - I learn easily

Sbagliate regolarmente - You make mistakes regularly

Some of the most commonly used adjectives (e.g. *molto, tanto, troppo, tutto, poco*) can be also used as adverbs, and in this case they are invariable and identical to the masculine singular form.

Lavoro troppo - I work too much

Mangiamo poco - We eat little

Leggete molto - You read a lot

Certain adverbs are normally used to modify not only verbs, but also adjectives and other adverbs:

La mia vita è molto tranquilla - My life is very quiet

Vivo molto tranquillamente - I live very quietly

Parli troppo velocemente e io capisco molto poco - You speak too quickly and I understand very little

4. *Ci* and *NE/Ci* e *NE*

The words *ci* (*vi*) and *ne* can be used as both adverbs and pronouns. They are normally positioned before the inflected verb, but after the infinitive, certain imperatives, the gerund and the participle. As an adverb of place with the meaning ‘here/there’, *ci* is frequently used with verbs like *andare*, *venire*, *essere*, *abitare*:

Ci vengo, ci vado - I come here, I go there

C'è, ci sono - there is, there are

Mi piace Bologna. Ci abito da tre anni - I like Bologna. I've lived there for three years

When talking about presence or availability you may also use the verb *avere*, often combined with *ci*, that changes into *ce* before the direct pronouns *lo*, *la*, *li*, *le*:

Hai una mappa di Bologna? Sì, ce l'ho. - Have you got a map of Bologna? Yes, I've got it

Ci is also used in idiomatic expressions with the verbs *mettere* and *volere*:

Per arrivare a Bologna ci metto un'ora. - You take one hour to get to Bologna

Ci vuole molta pazienza! - You need to be patient!

Used as a pronoun, *ci* can replace both ‘a + noun’ and ‘a + verb’ phrases:

Penso sempre alle vacanze. Ci penso sempre.

I always think about holidays. I always think about it

Lisa prova a ballare ma non ci riesce.

Lisa tries to dance but she is not able to

The word *ne*, used as an adverb of place means ‘from here/from there’:

Me ne vado - I'm leaving

From the locative meaning stems quite naturally the partitive uses of the pronoun *ne*:

Vuoi del vino? Sì, ne prendo un bicchiere - Do you want some wine? Yes, I'll have a glass

Conoscete dei ragazzi italiani? No, non ne conosciamo - Do you know any Italian guys? No, we don't

Used as a pronoun, *ne* can replace ‘di + noun’ phrases:

Giulia non parla mai del suo lavoro. Giulia non ne parla mai. - Giulia never talks about her job.

Giulia never talks about it

5. *Impersonal verbs/Forma impersonale*

In Italian language, there are different cases of verbs or phrases that can be used impersonally. The impersonal verbs do not have a determined subject and are mainly used in the third person singular. Verbs are made impersonal by using the pronoun *si* followed by the third-person singular form of the verb. All verbs can have this construction, where the subject is implied because it cannot be identified with a specific person or thing. This way of expressing impersonal statements is comparable to English sentences preceded by the subjects ‘one’, ‘they’ or ‘people’.

Si mangia bene in quel ristorante - One eats well in that restaurant

If the sentence contains a singular direct object *si* is normally followed by the third-person singular form of the verb, but the third person plural form of the verb is required if the sentence contains a plural direct object. This construction implies the passive voice.

A scuola si insegna poco il latino - Latin is less taught in school

A scuola si insegnano molte materie - A lot of subjects are taught in school

Impersonal phrases are usually formed also with the verb *essere* and a noun, an adjective or an adverb:

È una fortuna - It's a fortune

È bello, chiaro, evidente, importante - It's nice, clear, evident, important

È meglio - It's better

UNIT 6

1. Past participle//Il participio passato

The regular past participle is formed with the endings –ato for the 1st, -uto for the 2nd, and –ito for the 3rd conjugation, respectively:

guardato

ricevuto

dormito

The bad news is that there are many verbs with an irregular past participle, like *fare/fatto*, *essere/stato*, but the good news is that you can identify some basic groups:

Verbs with past participle in –so (mainly 2nd conjugation):

accendere - **acceso**

decidere - **deciso**

prendere - **preso**

chiudere - **chiuso**

mettere - **messo**

scendere - **sceso**

correre - **corso**

perdere - **perso**

Verbs with past participle in –to (both 2nd and 3rd conjugation):

vedere - **visto**

chiedere - **chiesto**

rimanere - **rimasto**

rispondere - **risposto**

leggere - **letto**

scrivere - **scritto**

rompere - **rotto**

vivere - **vissuto**

nascere - **nato**

scegliere - **scelto**

dire - **detto**

venire - **venuto**

morire - morto
aprire - aperto
offrire - offerto

The past participle is one of the most frequently used forms of Italian verbs, because it occurs in all compound tenses, combined with the auxiliary verbs *essere* or *avere*.

2. Present perfect//Il passato prossimo

The present perfect, or *passato prossimo*, is a compound tense formed with the present tense of an auxiliary (*essere* or *avere*) followed by the past participle of the verb you want in the past. Present perfect of the verb *lavorare* (to work):

Io ho lavorato
Tu hai lavorato
Lui ha lavorato
Noi abbiamo lavorato
Voi avete lavorato
Loro hanno lavorato

The *passato prossimo* describes an action or a state of being that occurred at a particular time in the past:

Ieri Anna ha mangiato un gelato Yesterday Anna ate an ice-cream
La scorsa estate abbiamo visitato l'Italia Last summer we visited Italy

The following words and temporal expressions often require the *passato prossimo*:

Ieri (yesterday): *l'altro ieri* 'the day before yesterday', *ieri sera* 'last night'
Scorso (last): *la settimana scorsa*, *il mese scorso*, *l'anno scorso*...
Fa (ago): *un giorno fa*, *un mese fa*, *un anno fa*...
Fino a (until)
Appena (just): *ho appena finito*
Già (already): *ho già finito*
Non ancora (not yet): *non ho ancora finito*
Mai (never): *non ho mai lavorato*

When used to specify the limits or the completeness of a past action, prepositional phrases with *per*, *in*, *da* ... *a*..., indicating precise times or dates, may signal that the *passato prossimo* is needed:

Ho abitato a Bologna per due anni - I lived in Bologna for two years
Dante Alighieri è nato nel 1265 - Dante Alighieri was born in 1265
Ho lavorato dalle tre alle sei - I worked from three to six

3. Use of *essere* and *avere* with present perfect/ Usò di *essere* e *avere* con il *passato prossimo*

In English only the verb ‘to have’ can be used to form compound tenses, whereas in Italian the choice between the ‘helping’ verbs *essere* or *avere* may be rather puzzling. In order to select the correct auxiliary verb, keep the following in mind:

- The majority of Italian verbs form compound tenses with *avere*.
- The auxiliary *avere* is always required with transitive verbs (i.e. those with a direct object), whereas *essere* is always required with reflexive verbs, and frequently required with intransitive verbs (i.e. those without a direct object).

Ieri ho incontrato i miei amici - Yesterday I met my friends

Mi sono lavato con cura - I washed myself with care

Il treno è arrivato puntuale - The train arrived on time

Please note the appropriate auxiliary selection with verbs that can be used both transitively and intransitively:

Ho finito il libro / Il film è finito

Ho cominciato un nuovo lavoro / L'anno nuovo è cominciato

Ho salito le scale / Sono salito sul treno

If the *passato prossimo* is formed with the auxiliary *avere*, the past participle remains unchanged. If the verb is conjugated with the auxiliary *essere*, the past participle agrees with the subject of the sentence in gender and number:

Alex è andato, uscito, partito, tornato...

Anna è andata

Alex e Giovanni sono andati

Anna e Elena sono andate

4. Object pronouns with present perfect/

Usò dei pronomi diretti con il passato prossimo

When using compound verb tenses, such as the present perfect (*passato prossimo*), the past participle (*participio passato*) must agree in number and gender with the direct object pronoun that precedes the verb, and with *ne* as well.

Hai letto il giornale? Sì, l'ho (lo ho) letto stamattina

Hai visto la nuova insegnante? No, non l'ho (la ho) ancora vista

Hai controllato i biglietti? Sì, li ho controllati attentamente

Hai incontrato le tue amiche? Le ho incontrate lo scorso sabato

Hai comprato le pere? Sì, ne ho comprate cinque

The agreement of the past participle is optional with direct object pronouns *mi*, *ti*, *ci*, *vi*.

Ieri ho cercato te e Alex, ma non vi ho trovati / trovato

Scusa, Maria: non ti avevo vista / visto!

UNIT 7

1. Imperfect /Imperfetto

The imperfect indicative is the most regular of all the tenses of Italian verbs. It is formed by adding the endings *-avo, -evo, -ivo* (for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd conjugation respectively) to the stem of the verb.

	1st conjugation: <i>arrivare</i>	2nd conjugation: <i>vedere</i>	3rd conjugation: <i>dormire</i>
<i>io</i>	arriv-avo	ved-evo	dorm-ivo
<i>tu</i>	arriv-avi	ved-evi	dorm-ivi
<i>lui, lei</i>	arriv-ava	ved-eva	dorm-iva
<i>noi</i>	arriv-avamo	ved-evamo	dorm-ivamo
<i>voi</i>	arriv-avate	ved-evate	dorm-ivate
<i>loro</i>	arriv-avano	ved-evano	dorm-ivano

Here you can find a table with the most common verbs that have an irregular form for the imperfect tense.

	<i>essere</i>	<i>fare</i>	<i>essere</i>	<i>bere</i>	<i>tradurre</i>	<i>produrre</i>	<i>porre</i>
<i>io</i>	ero	facevo	dicevo	bevevo	traducevo	producevo	ponevo
<i>tu</i>	eri	facevi	dicevi	bevevi	traducevi	producevi	ponevi
<i>lui, lei</i>	era	faceva	diceva	beveva	traduceva	produceva	poneva
<i>noi</i>	eravamo	facevamo	dicevamo	bevevamo	traducevamo	producevamo	ponevamo
<i>voi</i>	eravate	facevate	dicevate	bevevate	traducevate	producevate	ponevate
<i>loro</i>	erano	facevano	dicevano	bevevano	traducevano	producevano	ponevano

2. Past tenses/Usò dei tempi del passato

When talking about actions and events in the past that are regarded as uncompleted, ongoing, or habitual, Italian uses the imperfect tense, which typically describes:

a) Past actions/facts in their duration:

Pioveva da due giorni - It had been raining for two days

All'Università c'era una gran confusione - At the University there was a great mess

b) Past actions repeated regularly, as a habit:

L'estate scorsa andavamo al mare tutti i giorni - Last summer we used to go to the seaside everyday

Da giovane facevo molto sport - When I was young I used to practise a lot of sport

c) Events occurring at the same time in the past:

Mentre guardavo il film, mangiavo pop-corn - While I was watching the film, I ate pop-corn

L'insegnante parlava ma gli studenti non ascoltavano - The teacher was speaking, but students didn't listen

d) Narrated facts, in fairy tales and literature:

C'era una volta un regno molto lontano... - Once upon a time, in a far away kingdom...

When talking about actions and events in the past that are regarded as completed, Italian uses the perfect tense, which encompasses two forms: the present perfect (*passato prossimo*) and the simple perfect (*passato remoto*). The former is the perfect tense most frequently used in northern and much of central Italy, and its main function is to describe past events that may have some connection with the present (or the time when a sentence is spoken or written). The simple perfect is less frequently used, and its main function is to describe past events that have no connection with the present. In Italian you can frequently find sentences where the imperfect tense alternates with the perfect tense (both *passato remoto* and *passato prossimo*).

Mentre tornavo a casa, ho incontrato Giovanni - While I was going home, I met Giovanni

3. Phrases with conditional/Formule con il condizionale

The conditional is a verb mood that describes something that ‘might’ happen, and corresponds to its English counterpart ‘would + verb’. It is typically used in conditional sentences, but it can also be used on its own, as a polite way to express a request, to ‘soften’ a statement of opinion, and to report hearsay or unconfirmed information.

Vorrei un biglietto per Bologna, per favore - I'd like to have a ticket to Bologna, please

Potrei sapere a che ora parte il treno? - May I know at what time the train leaves?

Secondo me dovresti controllare l'orario - In my opinion, you should check the timetable

Il treno potrebbe essere in ritardo - The train could be late

Here you can find the conditional form of the modal verbs.

	<i>potere</i>	<i>volere</i>	<i>dovere</i>
<i>io</i>	potrei	vorrei	dovrei
<i>tu</i>	potresti	vorresti	dovresti
<i>lui, lei</i>	potrebbe	vorrebbe	dovrebbe
<i>noi</i>	potremmo	vorremmo	dovremmo
<i>voi</i>	potreste	vorreste	dovreste
<i>loro</i>	potrebbero	vorrebbero	dovrebbero

As an alternative to the conditional for polite requests you can also use the imperfect tense:

Volevo un biglietto per Bologna

4. Comparison/La comparazione

Comparative forms are used when a person, object, or activity is compared with another. In both English and Italian you can say that X possesses a quality more than, less than, or as much as Y. The appropriate structures and forms are:

Comparativo di maggioranza (to convey majority): *più...di* or *più...che*

Tu sei più alto di me - You are taller than me

Comparativo di minoranza (to convey minority): *meno...di* or *meno...che*

Lei è meno alta di te - She is less tall than you

You use *di* when comparing two different people or things:

Alex è meno gentile di Francesco - Alex is less kind than Francesco

You use *che* when the comparison is between two qualities of the same thing:

La mela più verde che rossa - The apple is more green than red

Comparativo di uguaglianza (to convey equality): (*così*)...*come* or (*tanto*)...*quanto*

Il vino italiano è (così) buono come il vino francese - Italian wine is as good as French wine

Alex è (tanto) bello quanto intelligente - Alex is as beautiful as intelligent

When used to compare nouns, (*tanto*)...*quanto* are adjectives and there is agreement:

Ho tante penne quanti libri - I have as many pens as books

Così and *tanto* are optional and usually avoided.

UNIT 7

1. Gerund and periphrastic forms/Gerundio e forme perifrastiche

In Italian, the gerund (*gerundio*) is equivalent to the *-ing* verb form in English. To form the simple gerund, add the endings – *ando* (for the 1st conjugation: *parlare*>*parlando*) and *-endo* (for the 2nd and 3rd conjugation: *leggere*>*leggendo*, *dormire*>*dormendo*) to the stem of the verb. Please note the following forms:

fare>*facendo*

bere>*bevendo*

dire>*dicendo*

The *gerundio* may be used alone or in a subordinate clause to express the conditions (manner, cause, means) that relate to the main action. In this case, it corresponds to the English *-ing* form preceded by the words ‘while’, ‘by’, ‘on’, ‘in’, or ‘upon’.

Studiando, si impara - One learns by studying

Please note that the gerund must have the same subject as the verb in the main clause:

Ti ho visto camminando in centro - I saw you while (I was) walking in the city centre

Ti ho visto mentre camminavi in centro - I saw you while you were walking in the city centre

As in English, the gerund can be used to describe continuous actions. Periphrastic structures for the present continuous, the past continuous, and the future continuous are formed with the verb *stare* (not *essere*!) + verb + gerund, as follows:

Sto parlando con te - I’m talking to you

Ieri a mezzanotte stavo leggendo un libro - Yesterday at midnight I was reading a book

Domani a mezzanotte starò dormendo - Tomorrow at midnight I will be sleeping

Another periphrastic structure that is very used in Italian is *stare per* + *infinitive* ‘to be about to’:

Sto per uscire - I’m about to leave

Stavo per uscire quando Matteo è arrivato - I was about to leave when Matteo arrived

2. Imperative/1/Imperativo/1

The imperative mood is used to give orders, advice, or exhortation. To easily form the imperative of 1st conjugation verbs, you just need to switch the *tu* and the *Lei* forms. For example, in the present indicative we say:

tu parli - you speak (informal) and *Lei parla* - you speak (formal),

and in the imperative we say:

parla! - speak! (informal) and *parli!* - speak! (formal)

For the 2nd and 3rd conjugation, the imperative second person singular is identical to the second person singular form of the present indicative:

tu leggi, tu dormi

leggi! dormi!

For all conjugations, the first and second person plural are identical to the corresponding forms of the present indicative:

noi parliamo, noi leggiamo, noi dormiamo

Parliamo! Leggiamo! Dormiamo!

voi parlate, voi leggete, voi dormite

Parlate! Leggete! Dormite!

Regular verbs therefore have the following imperative forms:

	<i>parlare</i>	<i>leggere</i>	<i>dormire</i>
tu	parla!	leggi!	dormi!
noi	parliamo!	leggiamo!	dormiamo!
voi	parlate!	leggete!	dormite!

3. Imperative/2/Imperativo/2

Irregular verbs follow the same pattern as regular ones, except for *essere*, *avere* and *sapere* which have irregular forms for the 2nd person singular and 2nd person plural. They are conjugated as follows:

	<i>essere</i>	<i>avere</i>	<i>sapere</i>
tu	sii!	abbi!	sappi!
voi	siate!	abbiate!	sappiate!

Note that *dire* has a truncated *tu* form: *di*'. The same goes for *andare*, *dare*, *fare*, and *stare*, but in this case a regular *tu* form is also possible: *va*'/*vai*, *da*'/*dai*, *fa*'/*fai*, *sta*'/*stai*.

<i>dire</i>	<i>andare</i>	<i>dare</i>	<i>fare</i>	<i>stare</i>
<i>dì</i>	<i>va</i> '/ <i>vai</i>	<i>da</i> '/ <i>dai</i>	<i>fa</i> '/ <i>fai</i>	<i>sta</i> '/ <i>stai</i>

Negative imperative corresponds to the forms of the present indicative for the 1st and 2nd person plural (*noi* and *voi*). For the 2nd person singular (*tu*) it is formed by adding **non** before the infinitive of the verb.

Non andiamo al mare, fa ancora freddo - Don't we go to the seaside, it is still cold

Non mangiate quella torta, non è buona - Don't eat that cake, it isn't good!
Non parlare così piano, non ti sento - Don't speak so softly, I can't hear you!

4. Future (regular verbs)/Futuro semplice dei verbi regolari

The future tense (*futuro semplice*) expresses an action that will take place in the future. In English the future is expressed with the helping verb 'will' or the phrase 'to be going to', whereas in Italian the future tense is marked by verb endings.

For 1st conjugation regular verbs, change the infinitive ending *-are* into *-er-* to obtain the stem for the future tense.

For 2nd and 3rd conjugation regular verbs, drop the final *-e* of the infinitive to obtain the stem for the future tense.

Then add the following future endings to the stem: *-ò, -ai, -à, -emo, -ete, -anno*.

This table sums up the conjugation of regular verbs:

	<i>arrivare</i>	<i>prendere</i>	<i>dormire</i>
io	arriverò	prenderò	dormirò
tu	arriverai	prenderai	dormirai
lui/lei	arriverà	prenderà	dormirà
noi	arriveremo	prenderemo	dormiremo
voi	arriverete	prenderete	dormirete
loro	arriveranno	prenderanno	dormiranno

Verbs with infinitives ending in *-ciare* and *-giare* drop the *i* before adding the future endings to the root: *tu comincerai, noi viaggeremo*. Verbs with infinitives ending in *-care* and *-gare* add an *h* to the future stem to preserve the hard sound of the *c* or *g* of the infinitive: *io cercherò, loro pagheranno*.

5. Future (irregular verbs)/Futuro semplice dei verbi irregolari

The verbs *dare, dire, stare, and fare* simply drop the final *-e* of their infinitives and form the future tense from the stems *dar-, dir-, star-* and *far-*, respectively. The stem of *essere* is *sar-*. These stems are then combined with the regular future-tense endings: *-ò, -ai, -à, -emo, -ete, -anno*.

	<i>dare</i>	<i>dire</i>	<i>stare</i>	<i>fare</i>	<i>essere</i>
io	darò	dirò	starò	farò	sarò
tu	darai	dirai	starai	farai	sarai
lui/lei	darà	dirà	starà	farà	sarà
noi	daremo	diremo	staremo	faremo	saremo
voi	darete	direte	starete	farete	sarete
loro	daranno	diranno	staranno	faranno	saranno

Also be aware of the verbs with an irregularly shortened stem in the future tense, like *andare/andr-, avere/avr-, bere/berr-, cadere/cadr-, dovere/dovr-, potere/potr-, sapere/sapr-, tenere/terr-, vedere/vedr-, venire/verr-, vivere/vivr-*.

	<i>andare</i>	<i>avere</i>
io	andrò	avrò
tu	andrai	avrà

lui/lei	andrà	avrà
noi	andremo	avremo
voi	andrete	avrete
loro	andranno	avranno

6. Using the future/Usi del futuro

In general the future is used:

- to describe actions or events happening in a distant or unspecified future:

Un giorno sarò ricco - One day I will be rich

- to express the intention to do something in the future:

In estate andrò in vacanza a Parigi - During the summer I am going on holiday to Paris

- to express a possibility or a probability:

Suonano alla porta. Sarà il postino - Someone is ringing at the door. It will be the postman

When talking about events happening in a near, imminent future, and when referring to scheduled actions, or giving instructions, you can use the present tense:

Che fai stasera? Vado al cinema - What are you doing tonight? I'm going to the cinema

Le lezioni cominciano a ottobre - Classes will start in October

Quando arrivi a Londra, vai subito al consolato italiano - When you arrive in London, go straight to the Italian consulate.